

Guiding Principles and Goals of the Primary Program

Philosophy

The Primary Program nurtures the continuing growth of children's knowledge and their understanding of selves and the world. It provides a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment where learning flourishes. The program recognizes that children are individuals, and every child is unique. The program facilitates continuous learning by accommodating the broad range of children's needs, their learning rates and styles, and their knowledge, experiences, and interests. It presents an integrated curriculum, incorporating a variety of instructional models, strategies, and resources.



The program respects the development of the whole child. It reflects an understanding that children learn through active involvement and play and that children demonstrate and represent their knowledge in a variety of ways. It recognizes the social nature of learning and the essential role of language in mediating thought, communication, and learning.

The program views assessment and evaluation as integral components of the teaching-learning process. Assessment and evaluation support each child's learning and assist the teacher in making appropriate educational decisions.

The program values teachers and parents as partners in children's learning. Teachers and parents consult and collaborate to create a climate of respect, success, and joy necessary for lifelong learning.

Common Understandings

- **Experience, knowledge, curiosity, and sense of wonder are foundations for children's learning.**

The experiences and knowledge young children bring to school, combined with their natural curiosity and sense of wonder, is the foundation for learning in the primary years. The Primary Program is designed to help develop the potential of each child. It respects and values differences in children, building upon individual differences rather than stressing conformity. It provides opportunities for continuous learning without the restrictions created by fixed ability grouping of children or by retention and promotion practices. It allows for the fact that for each child learning occurs in different areas, at different times, and in different ways.

- **Children learn through active involvement and play.**
The program honors the development of the whole child. It reflects an understanding that children learn through active involvement and play and that children demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways.

- **The ideal learning environment provides time and opportunity for children to learn cooperatively and collaboratively.**
The primary learning environment provides time and opportunity for children to experience and respond creatively to their world. The learning environment is social in nature, providing a secure and stimulating climate for all children. It provides time and opportunity for children to take appropriate risks and to explore and investigate their world. Children have experiences which encourage them to interact with others, to develop interpersonal skills, and to work and learn cooperatively and collaboratively.

If children are excited, curious, resourceful, and confident about their ability to figure things out and eager to exchange opinions, with other adults and children, they are bound to go on learning, particularly when they are out of the classroom and throughout the rest of their lives.

Kamii, 1990

- **Assessment and evaluation are the basis for educational decisions, which support each child's learning.**
Evidence of what each child can do is collected frequently and used to make decisions about instruction and activities to meet learning needs. Assessment and evaluation are viewed as integral components of the teaching-learning process which support each child's learning; they assist the teacher in making appropriate educational decisions. The assessment and evaluation of each child's growth in learning is based on the goals of the primary program, not by comparison with other children. In this way, children are encouraged to improve their performance and realize their individual potential rather than to compete with others.

- **The young child learns to make sense of a complex world.**
Every child enters the world ready to learn, wanting to learn, and, in fact, needing to learn. The need for food and shelter is matched by a vital need to make sense of their surroundings. Imagine a world of the very young child, a complex world of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures for which the child must find meaning. In a real sense, knowledge about this world is constructed by the child and with very little direct help from others.

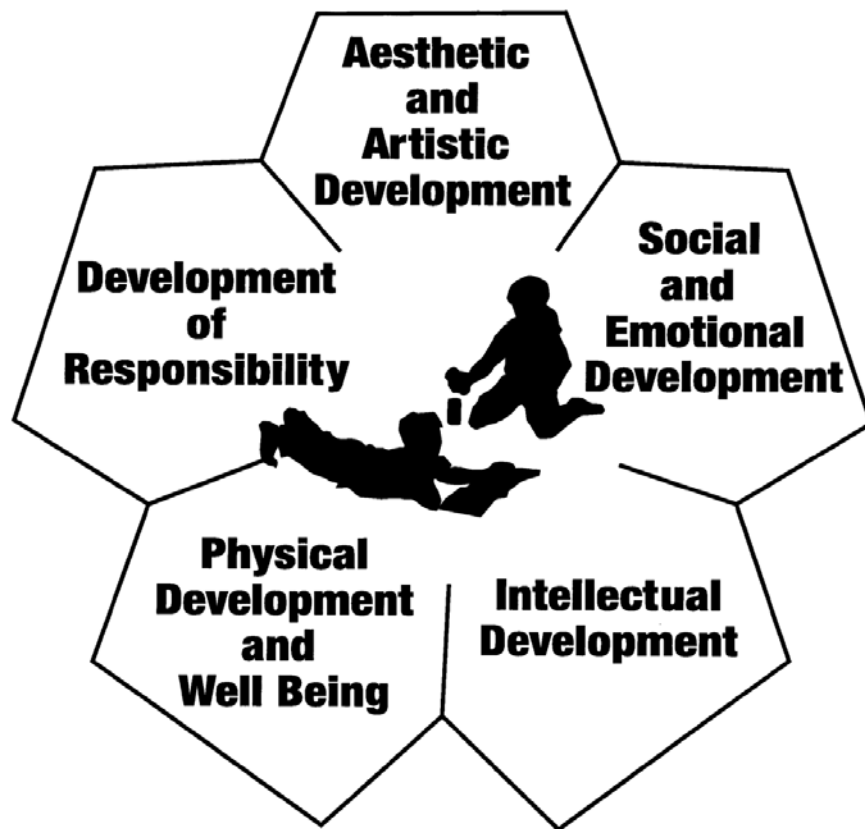


- **Teachers and parents are valued partners in each child's education.**

The program values teachers and parents as partners in the child's education; they consult and collaborate to create a climate of respect, success, and joy. Parents are the most influential people in their children's lives. Children learn the language of the home and how language is used. They learn the attitudes and values that their parents have about learning. No wonder some educators have said that children accomplish the most complex learning of their lives before they ever come to school. And, they have done it largely by themselves on their own initiative. Clearly, learning is natural, and wanting to know and learn are basic human characteristics.

Goals of the Primary Program

The goals of the primary program are interrelated and of equal importance. They provide the foundation upon which the program is built. Foundation statements support each goal, the building blocks which educators use to plan experiences and acknowledge and honor the basic human need to learn.



Primary Program Goals

Aesthetic and Artistic Development

A variety of experiences will be provided to enable the child to:

- Develop enthusiasm for the arts
- Imagine and visualize through the arts
- Respond through the arts
- Express and represent through the arts
- Interpret through the arts
- Create through the arts
- Appreciate the arts
- Think, learn, and communicate through the arts



Social and Emotional Development

A variety of experiences will be provided to enable the child to:

- Develop a positive, realistic self-concept
- Develop independence
- Set appropriate goals
- Feel satisfaction with accomplishments and efforts
- Cope with change
- Share and cooperate
- Develop friendships
- Learn from others
- Enjoy living and learning

Intellectual Development

A variety of experiences will be provided to enable the child to:

- Sustain and extend natural curiosity
- Develop thinking through meaningful learning experiences
- Use language to facilitate thinking and learning
- Use language to communicate effectively
- Develop and integrate the attitudes, dispositions, skills, and knowledge of the fine arts, the humanities, the practical arts, and the sciences
- Become an independent, lifelong learner



Physical Development and Well Being

A variety of experiences will be provided to enable the child to:

- Learn and practice safety procedures
- Take care of and respect one's body
- Develop an awareness of good nutrition
- Develop a wide variety of motor skills while maintaining physical fitness
- Develop an appreciation and enjoyment of human movement
- Learn social skills in a physically active setting

Development of Responsibility

A variety of experiences will be provided to enable the child to:

- Value and respect individual contributions
- Value, respect, and appreciate cultural identity and heritage
- Accept and demonstrate empathy
- Acquire cooperative and independent social skills
- Respect and care for the environment
- Adapt to a changing world
- Value and respect individual differences in people



Aesthetic and Artistic Development

A light-hearted, natural process of becoming acquainted with artists begins when young children become aware that the pictures in their favorite books, the sculpture in the park, and the woven hanging in the living room were made by artists.

Thompson, 1995

Experiencing the arts is an integral, natural, and essential part of each child's development. The arts provide, in addition to pleasure and satisfaction, a way for children to respond to and interpret their real and imagined worlds; a vehicle through which children may express curiosity, feeling, and understanding; and a context in which children may discover and appreciate aspects of their cultural heritage and that of others. Through dance, drama, music, and visual arts we share with one another our creativity and ourselves.

Participating in the fine arts is an essential part of an early childhood setting. As young children explore and experience their world through the arts, they learn to respond thoughtfully and sensitively to their environment. They develop personal creativity and a sense of aesthetics. They enrich, deepen, and extend their thought and language, their learning, and communication.

In order to achieve these goals, the primary program provides children with experiences that help them:

- Develop enthusiasm for the arts.
- Imagine and visualize through the arts.
- Respond through the arts.
- Express and represent through the arts.
- Interpret through the arts.
- Create through the arts.
- Appreciate the arts.
- Think, learn, and communicate through the arts.

Characteristics of the Learner:

- *Unique*
- *Natural explorer, creator, inventor*
- *Enjoys rhythm and movement*
- *Uses all the senses*
- *Responsive*
- *Enthusiastic*
- *Vivid imagination*
- *Inquiring*
- *Enjoys socio-dramatic play*



Teaching Specialists and the Arts

The arts are an integral part of the early childhood curriculum. The responsibility for integration of the arts lies with the classroom teacher. Experiences in dance, art, music, and drama are a natural means for integrating learning from other content areas. The role of the specialist in music, art, or physical education is to support what is happening in the classroom by extending the learning. It is essential that the classroom teacher and specialists form partnerships and collaborate regularly to design experiences that are connected and meaningful for children.

Developing Enthusiasm for the Arts

The primary program provides children with opportunities to participate in a wide spectrum of the arts. Active participation in dance, drama, music, and visual art fosters children's interest in and enthusiasm for artistic endeavors. It helps children appreciate and understand the creative works of others.

Imagining and Visualizing Through the Arts

Images reflect the wonder of the human experience. Through the arts, children are encouraged to use and enrich their natural ability to create images and to engage in make-believe. Visual art elicits visual representations of personal images, creative dance evokes images through movement, drama involves response to imagined characters, and listening to music gives children aural images of narrative or abstract ideas.

Responding Through the Arts

The arts provide a unique avenue for children to respond to the world through the senses and the imagination. As children respond to a variety of visual, aural, tactile, and kinesthetic stimuli, they develop an array of personal meanings in the art forms as well as ways of expressing ideas and feelings in unique ways.

Expressing and Representing Through the Arts

As children perceive the world around them and respond to the myriad of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic stimuli, they express their reactions and responses. In doing so, they develop a variety of ways of representing what they know. With the teacher's encouragement and guidance, children experience a multitude of different art forms, thus opening up many avenues of expression.

Through the process of creating beautiful things, children begin to build a foundation for aesthetic appreciation which enriches life.

Lasky & Mukerji, 1980

The arts develop the senses, enrich the emotional self, and allow for a richer experiencing of the world. They encourage critical and creative thinking and personalize communication of thoughts and ideas to others. For young children who may not be able to fully verbalize ideas, expression through the arts is especially important.



*Creativity cannot be imposed
but must come from the child.*

Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1975

Interpreting through the Arts

Children relate the experiences of others to themselves as they make sense of the world around them. Interpreting or creating images for others is a way to communicate meaning. Whether children are dancing, painting, modeling, singing, moving to music, or acting, they are communicating their personal responses to a stimulus or idea, and in so doing are learning more about their own feelings and emotions. Through reflection and discussion of their arts experiences, they express their own feelings and begin to interpret the feelings of others. Valuing and accepting children's responses encourages continued learning in the arts.

Creating through the Arts

Creativity is the extension of thought in a new or different way. It is the assimilation and selection of ideas and their reinterpretation or restatement in a personal and individual manner. Encouraging creativity helps children explore their thinking and represent it in many different ways. It helps children express themselves, consciously and sub-consciously. It helps children grow and develop toward their full potential.

To foster the creativity of children, the teacher provides an environment that is stimulating, safe and nurturing. Within this framework, children have the chance to try things for themselves, to use their imagination, and to judge their own degree of accomplishment. For both the child and teacher, the prime goal of the activity is not the final product, but the process. For learning is continuous and the final product is only one part of the process.

Appreciating the Arts

Appreciation of the arts begins with the opportunity to experience a rich variety of art forms. Through response, reflection, and discussion, children extend their appreciation of the relationships among art forms, and they learn about the relationship of the arts to society and to the environment. Through this process, children begin to develop an appreciation of artistic endeavor and to form personal concepts and values of what is aesthetically pleasing.



Thinking, Learning, and Communicating Through the Arts

Learning through the arts gives children the tools to make individual aesthetic judgments, to select appropriate personal representations, and to share their artistic vision with others, regardless of the barriers of language and culture.

As children explore a rich classroom environment with multi-sensory experiences provided through the arts, they acquire a variety of new and enhanced ways of thinking, learning, and communicating. These may range from making aesthetic judgments to clarifying and expressing ideas and feelings based on real, vicarious, and imagined experiences.

Since the arts are a means of thinking, learning, and communicating, they complement and foster work in all areas of the primary program. Because they all involve communication, the arts and other curriculum areas frequently can be integrated.

We learn through our senses. The ability to see, feel, hear, smell and taste provides the contact between us and the environment...The greater the opportunity to develop an increased sensitivity and the greater the awareness of all the senses, the greater will be the opportunity for learning.

Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1975



Social and Emotional Development

Social and emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development.

Elias, et al., 1997

Emotional, social, and total well-being are interrelated and are essential for growth and development. Social and emotional well-being determine the way we feel, think, and act. They are a precondition for optimal learning. It is important for children to be nurtured and to develop emotionally and socially in healthy ways.

Children come to school exhibiting wide variations in development and a broad range of behaviors. Some children come to school with special needs and may have specific physical, intellectual, or behavioral learning needs. These children are part of the school culture and, like all children, need acceptance, respect, empathy, and understanding.

The early primary setting seeks to develop a positive self-concept in every child. It offers the child opportunities to gain confidence and competence in living with other people and in functioning independently and cooperatively. It provides the child with experiences designed to:

- Develop a positive, realistic self-concept
- Develop independence
- Set appropriate goals and feel satisfaction in accomplishment and effort
- Cope with change
- Share and cooperate
- Develop friendships
- Learn from others
- Enjoy living and learning

The teacher is responsible for the climate in the classroom as well as for meeting the individual needs of all students. The role of guidance counselors and social workers is to observe in the classroom and support children, families, and teachers by providing feedback, intervention, and instruction. It is essential the classroom teacher, parents, and counselors collaborate regularly to help children meet program goals.



Characteristics of the Learner:

- Unique
- Talkative
- Friendly
- Social
- Sensitive
- Likes to please
- Learning to cooperate and collaborate
- Egocentric, moving toward sociocentric
- Dependent on adults
- Needs reassurance
- Resolves inner conflicts, through play and day dreaming
- Finds pleasure in regularity and personal routines
- Trusts adults

Developing a Positive, Realistic Self-Concept

The emotional well-being of children is paramount in ensuring that children develop to their full potential. The child who has a positive, realistic self-concept is more likely to feel secure and be capable of making thoughtful and appropriate choices and decisions. The child who is confident is eager for new experiences. Successful learning, in turn, enhances self-esteem.

The criterion of social competence does not require that all children be social butterflies. It is not a source of concern if a child chooses to work or play alone, as long as he or she is capable of interacting productively and successfully with another when social interaction is desired, appropriate, or necessary.

Katz & Chard, 1990

In the primary classroom, children are encouraged to be open-minded, inquiring, and self-initiating. They are supported as they take risks, solve problems, make choices and decisions, and deal with the decisions of others. They are helped to learn from their mistakes and successes. When children grow and develop in an environment that is positive and supportive, they are more enthusiastic, more willing to take risks, and better able to set and actualize their goals.

Developing Independence

The child who is independent is able to make self-governing choices and decisions. In the primary classroom or center, the child who is given opportunities to make choices and decisions and who is learning to work in a self-directed way is the child who is learning to

become independent. At first, children may require a good deal of support and guidance because they are more egocentric in their learning and may not have notions of working independently. But, as children grow and learn in a supportive classroom setting, their development is reflected in an increased sense of self-direction and growth in autonomy.

Setting Appropriate Goals and Feeling Satisfaction in Accomplishments and Efforts

As children are encouraged to explore and experiment, to think divergently, and to express differing ideas, they begin to develop a belief in their own abilities as learners. The teacher enhances this learning and helps children understand and value themselves as learners. The teacher supports the child by honoring each child's efforts and accomplishments and by helping children take on increasing responsibility for setting their own goals, directing their own learning, and monitoring and assessing their own progress. Feeling secure and valued in the classroom helps children learn, and it serves to increase their knowledge of themselves as unique and competent people.

Coping with Change

Change occurs constantly throughout life. It can be gradual or sudden, pleasant or harsh, and it may become apparent only in retrospect. For most children, change is a healthy part of life: it stimulates the mind and body. For others, it takes a caring, thoughtful, and sensitive teacher to help them learn to cope with change and to grow emotionally, socially, and intellectually through change.

The teacher is sensitive to the strong feelings and emotions and to the sometimes inappropriate behaviors evoked by sudden, unexpected, or unwelcome change in a child's life. The teacher accepts these as prerequisites to the child's development of appropriate ways of coping and, when possible, guides the child in developing new strategies for coping. It is helpful for children to reflect upon

change as they are experiencing it. Children who trust their ability to cope effectively with change have a sense of being more able to manage during change and are, therefore, more likely to react in a positive manner.

Sharing and Cooperating

To live, work, and learn together we must learn to share and cooperate. In the primary classroom, children learn how to function as part of a social network. The classroom is an active workshop where children have many opportunities to cooperate and share materials, ideas, space, and attention. Through activities such as taking turns, sharing, contributing to discussion, following group directions and ideas, and being sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, children become aware of and learn to practice appropriate behavior in a group. The teacher takes into account that children's social behavior is influenced by their developmental maturity, language competence, and problem-solving abilities. The teacher sets reasonable expectations for levels of cooperation and sharing for each child and identifies and allows for specific learning needs. Through observation and interaction with children, the teacher models, reinforces, and teaches the appropriate social attitudes, skills, and behaviors.



Nothing we learn is more important than the skills required to work cooperatively with other people. Most human interaction is cooperative. Without some skill in cooperating effectively, it is difficult (if not impossible) to maintain a marriage, hold a job, or be part of a community, society, and world.

Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1988

Developing Friendships

A capacity for loving others and the ability to seek and give companionship is the basis of all human relationships. The capacity to form friendships begins with the child's own sense of security and well-being. This allows the child to move outward toward others. As primary children learn to make friends, they also learn appropriate ways of being with others in group settings. Learning how to make and maintain friendships is part of the social learning fostered in the early childhood setting.

Learning from Others

The Primary Program creates continuous opportunities for children to work together. Working with a partner and in large and small groups facilitates learning with and from others. As children grow and develop in the classroom or center, they learn to view the world not just through their own eyes but through a variety of shared viewpoints. Learning to cooperate and cooperating to learn promote individual learning, build self-esteem, enhance interpersonal relationships, and build the concept of community.

Enjoying Living and Learning

If children see themselves as valued members of their classroom community and if they believe in themselves as learners, they are able to embrace all that life has to offer and to see the potential of each new experience.

In the primary classroom or center, acceptance, respect, warmth, caring, and a touch of humor create a climate in which children can embrace new learning with enjoyment and appreciation. When children view themselves as valued and successful, they are developing their potential as lifelong learners.



We want to help children examine their feelings and attitudes and challenge them to accept new information and a variety of people into their lives.

York, 1991



Intellectual Development

Most children are motivated to learn by an intense desire to make sense out of their world and achieve the competencies desired by the culture

Bredekamp & Copple (Ed.). 1997

Intellectual development may be defined as the process of deriving meaning from experience through acquiring, structuring, and restructuring knowledge. It is an integral part of every aspect of our lives. As we assimilate and use knowledge in independent, thoughtful, and purposeful ways, we become able to shape our lives and the future of our world.



The experiences and knowledge which young children bring to school, combined with their natural curiosity and sense of wonder, are the foundation for learning in the primary years. The primary program seeks to build on, extend, and deepen this foundation as the teacher works with children to inquire about, reflect upon, and represent their knowledge.

The teacher provides experiences to help the child:

- Sustain an extended natural curiosity
- Engage in first hand experiences
- Develop thinking through meaningful learning experiences
- Use language to facilitate thinking and learning
- Use language to communicate effectively
- Develop and integrate dispositions/attitudes, skills, and knowledge in various areas of curriculum
- Become an independent, life long learner

Children come to school already active thinkers, possessed of natural curiosity and an eagerness to learn. As children are actively involved in their learning, pursuing topics of personal interest and relevance, asking their own questions, solving problems and reflecting on their own thinking, so they experience the joy of learning and come to believe in themselves as learners.



Factors Affecting Intellectual Development

No single factor can account for intellectual development. It is a combination of the factors and the interaction among them that influences this development. When planning experiences that enhance intellectual development, the teacher takes all of these factors into consideration.

Factor	Characteristics
<i>Maturation</i>	Physical maturing, especially of the central nervous system
<i>Experiences</i>	Handling, moving, thinking about concrete objects and events
<i>Social interaction</i>	Playing, communicating, working with other children and adults
<i>Environment</i>	Home, community, school
<i>Equilibration</i>	The process of bringing maturation, experience, and social interaction together so as to build and rebuild mental structures
<i>Individuality</i>	Learning style, dispositions, prior knowledge, interests, self-concept

Characteristics and Stages of Children's Thinking

Children think differently from adults. They must construct their own knowledge. The teacher, therefore, chooses, plans, and structures experiences with due consideration to children's ways of thinking. Children respond characteristically to different situations and events, depending on their stage of development. While most children pass through developmental stages in the same order, the rate does vary from child to child. Some children may reach later stages at an earlier age, while some function at earlier stages for longer periods of time. The transition from one stage to another is neither abrupt nor final, and learners often respond in ways characteristic of more than one stage at a given time. Some children may never reach the level of normal operational thought or may achieve this level of thinking in only one area of expertise.

Characteristics of a Learner:

- *Curious, seeking, social human being*
- *Natural explorer and inventor*
- *Thinks differently from adults*
- *Learns best through play*
- *Learns through social interaction*
- *Is developing thinking skills*
- *Represents knowledge in different ways*
- *Clarifies and extends thinking through language*
- *Uses language to communicate*

The thinking process starts with a structure of or a way of thinking that is characteristic of one's level. Some external disturbances or experience creates a conflict or disequilibrium in this way of thinking. When this happens, the child will often rely on established thinking strategies and behavior from an earlier stage of development. In time, the child solves the conflict through further intellectual activity, moving towards a new way of thinking and structuring things, a way that provides understanding, satisfaction, and equilibrium.

“In this process, each person is continuously checking new information against old rules, revising the rules when discrepancies appear, and reaching new understandings, or constructions of reality. In psychological terms, the old rules are the existing cognitive structures. When the old rules and the new information collide, the checking process generates cognitive disequilibrium. The revision is the accommodation that occurs when new rules or new internal cognitive structures are required to replace the old ones, which no longer explain reality. The new understandings and stops along the path of learning that occur when equilibrium is temporarily restored. This process occurs in both the teachers and students, in both academic and social context” (Brooks, 1990).

There are many models and theories to guide us in understanding the development of thinking. As a pioneer in the field of child development, Piaget has provided a model that serves as a springboard to other models. The Piagetian model is included here as a basic reference to consider when trying to understand the development of a child's thinking.



Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Growth

Stage	Ages *	Characteristics
Sensorimotor Thinking	0–2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experiments to discover properties of objects and events ▪ Modifies familiar action patterns to fit new situations ▪ Begins to think before acting ▪ Is developing object permanence and a sense of space
Preoperational Thinking	2–5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is beginning to think before acting ▪ Is egocentric ▪ Perceives parts or wholes but not parts in relation to wholes ▪ Continues to rely on appearance rather than logic ▪ Judges quantity on the basis of space taken by objects and length on the basis of how far one end protrudes ▪ Is constructing concepts by acting on the environment
Transitional	5–7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses language to direct own activities and activities of others ▪ Begins to see others points of view ▪ Thinking begins to be more logical but relies heavily on real objects and experiences
Concrete Operational Thinking	7–11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Still needs real objects to assist with reasoning ▪ Can reflect about events in the immediate past ▪ Understands cause and effect ▪ Can focus on detail and still keep the whole in mind ▪ Develops conservation of number, length, and volume ▪ Is able to reverse thought, understand actions, undo previous actions, predict changes, and anticipate outcomes ▪ Shows increased ability to express and receive ideas in symbolic forms (e.g., words, numerals) ▪ Can focus on more than his or her own point of view ▪ Is gaining further understanding of the sequencing of events
Formal Operational Thinking	11 years-adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is able to think beyond concrete reality ▪ Draws conclusions not only through direct observation but also through hypothetical statements ▪ Sees own point of view as one of many possible views ▪ Proposes hypothetical experiments and tests these mentally or physically ▪ Is able to think about his or her thinking (metacognition) ▪ Considers abstract concepts (e.g., justice)

* Approximate Age

Engagement in First-Hand Experiences

Children learn best when they focus on and solve problems rising from or closely connected with their own lives. The teacher provides for the child first-hand experiences that include both “hands on” and “minds on” activities. Children’s manipulation of objects is critical to development of logical thinking during the years prior to entry into the formal operational state. The more meaningful and varied the child’s active encounters with the real world are in the early years, the stronger the foundations for logical thinking and the greater the receptivity to instruction.

When subject matter is dynamic, intellectually intriguing, and personal—when it bestows power to the learner—the ‘details’ also become important and memorable.

Tomlinson, 1999

The teacher presents content so children can assimilate it in accordance with their stage of development. For example, too much too soon creates problems of understanding. A child’s inability to follow spoken or written directions is not always due to inattention or poor memory: children see and hear what they understand.

The teacher provides experiences that encourage children to develop intellectually as they engage in a variety of first-hand experiences. Children need to have opportunities for active involvement, close observation, thinking, talking with others and, once again, reflecting upon these experiences.

The following chart provides a framework to use when planning learning experiences which foster intellectual development.

Do	Observe	Think	Talk	Communicate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience ▪ Touch ▪ Explore ▪ Investigate ▪ Experiment ▪ Test ▪ Discover ▪ Follow directions ▪ Seek ▪ Plan ▪ Focus ▪ Attend ▪ Select ▪ Decide ▪ Play ▪ Invent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek ▪ Identify ▪ Define ▪ Label ▪ Describe ▪ Count ▪ Note similarities and differences ▪ Note central meaning ▪ Note relationships ▪ Remember ▪ Explain ▪ Generalize ▪ Analyze ▪ Understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflect ▪ Judge equivalence ▪ Compare ▪ Estimate ▪ Develop concepts of space, time ▪ Classify ▪ Seriate ▪ Pattern ▪ Associate ▪ Solve problems ▪ Infer ▪ Know ▪ Make decisions ▪ Think critically and creatively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State needs ▪ State wants ▪ Justify ▪ Monitor ▪ Direct ▪ Report ▪ Predict ▪ Express thoughts, ideas, plans, knowledge, understanding ▪ Clarify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborate ▪ Wonder ▪ Question ▪ Gain information ▪ Interpret central meaning ▪ Criticize ▪ Evaluate ▪ Clarify ▪ Anticipate ▪ Predict ▪ Represent ▪ Dramatize ▪ Write ▪ Share ▪ Cooperate

Physical Development and Well-Being

Play and recreation activities are major contributors to the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of children. In fact, it is seen to be as important to their growth and development as are the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education. Hum, 1979

Physical well-being is an integral part of total well-being. It is essential for living and learning. The Primary Program provides children with experiences to help them learn about their growth and development. It underscores the interrelationships among physical activity, nutrition, safety, health, and recreation and the child's role in maintaining a healthy life-style.



Children have a natural curiosity about and interest in learning about themselves and their bodies. The teacher plans a balanced instructional program and provides opportunities for a range and variety of experiences which allow for varied responses reflective of ranges and levels of ability. Although young children have somewhat limited control over health, nutrition, and safety factors, they learn about their roles and responsibilities where they do have choices. In the Primary Program, children learn about issues that affect their well-being so they can make informed and responsible decisions about health, nutrition, and safety.

It is important in the development of all children that regular activities for physical development be included in their school experiences. For some children, adaptations will be needed to help them cope with their unique challenges.

The primary program provides experiences that help children:

- Learn and practice safety measures
- Take care of and respect their bodies, avoid abusive substances
- Develop an awareness of good nutrition
- Maintain physical fitness
- Develop an appreciation and enjoyment of human movement
- Learn social skills in a physical activity setting

The health and safety of children should be paramount considerations... We help children learn, understand, and observe cautions as sensible behavior.

Holt, 1977

These experiences throughout the child's day make it essential that the classroom teacher and the specialist in physical education collaborate regularly to provide active learning across the curriculum.

Learning and Practicing Safety Measures

A regard for and appreciation of safety and well-being is essential. The teacher ensures the learning environment is safe and that children are aware of and actively attend to the safety and well-being of themselves and others. The teacher helps children understand their role in maintaining health and safety, and children learn to extend these attitudes, skills, and knowledge into the wider community.

Taking Care of and Respecting One's Body

Healthful living implies regard and respect for one's body. In the primary classroom or center, the teacher builds on the personal habits and attitudes established in the home in the child's early years. With other significant adults, the teacher models and helps children learn about all aspects of healthful living. The teacher provides experiences that help children learn about safety and well-being, care of the body, and nutrition to help them appreciate their own roles in providing for a healthy life.

Characteristics of the Learner:

- *Unique*
- *Active*
- *Energetic*
- *Muscles still developing*
- *Needs mobility*
- *Learns by handling things*

Developing a Wide Variety of Motor Skills While Promoting Physical Fitness

Physical fitness is one component of a healthy life-style. The teacher capitalizes on the natural characteristics of children to be active learners and assists in developing a wide variety of motor skills for everyday life and leisure activities. In planning activities that stem from their need to play, move, and explore, the teacher provides children with opportunities for the development of fitness—cardiovascular and muscle endurance, strength, flexibility, and weight management—and an understanding of the need for fitness.



Developing Awareness of and Practicing Good Nutrition

While we are all born with inherited traits which influence our physical characteristics, environmental factors also impact upon our health. One of many important factors in a child's growth and development is nutrition. In early primary settings, learning about food directly through cooking, tasting, and experimenting provides children with hands-on experiences that help them learn best. These experiences are designed to help children understand that optimum growth and development and efficient body functioning are dependent upon appropriate nutritional habits.

Developing Appreciation and Enjoyment of Human Movement

We value physical accomplishment and respect athletes and artists who push physical movement and activity to the limits of performance. The primary program helps children develop and maintain health and well-being through an appreciation and enjoyment of movement and activity. Young children develop muscle control, coordination, body awareness, space awareness, and physical fitness as they explore and practice natural body movements. Physical development is promoted in a non-competitive environment.

Developing Social Skills in a Physical Activity Setting

Society encourages the development of leisure activities, many of which take place in a physical activity setting. In the primary classroom or center, children learn social skills through games and activities. Being part of a group, working with a partner, operating within rules, collaborating to create new rules, being a leader, sharing, listening, and cooperating are but a few examples of the skills learned through group activities. In the primary classroom or center, each member of the group makes a unique and important contribution in maintaining the goals of the entire group. Caring, thoughtfulness, consideration of others, loyalty, and honesty are nurtured and encouraged.



Development of Responsibility

As people become more sensitive to others' feelings and more willing to cooperate for the collective good, our planet will become a much healthier and happier place to live, for all of us. Moves in this direction are absolutely essential to ensure a decent quality of life, and to ensure life itself.

Orlick, 1978

The way we view the world and act upon it is directly related to our attitudes, beliefs, and values. Responsibility requires that people understand the interdependence of social and ecological factors and be willing to commit themselves to making a difference. In the primary program, children are helped to move beyond an egocentric view of the world toward appreciating and understanding broader, complex issues and to contributing individually and collectively to solutions. Experiences that help children learn critical thinking, conflict resolution, individual and collaborative decision-making, and a sense of community prepare them to seek solutions based upon awareness and understanding of what it means to be responsible.



The primary program provides children with experiences to help them learn to:

- Value and respect individual contributions and uniqueness
- Value, respect, and appreciate cultural identity, diversity, and heritage
- Accept and demonstrate empathy
- Become responsible members of society
- Respect and care for the environment
- Adapt to a changing world

Valuing and Respecting Individual Contributions and Uniqueness

In order that people throughout the world live in dignity and at peace with one another, a greater understanding of our social, moral, and ecological interdependence is required. We need to appreciate everyone has a unique contribution to make. As children learn about themselves and their culture, they begin to understand that all people possess similar needs, feelings, and aspirations, and that everyone has a contribution to make, regardless of background and ability level. The teacher provides activities to help children increase their awareness of others through understanding the similarities of all people. In this way, children can be helped to understand that diversity adds richness to our society.

Valuing, Respecting, and Appreciating Cultural Identity, Diversity, and Heritage

Cultural identity is an integral part of who we are. As we grow in our understanding and appreciation of ourselves within our own culture, we move from an egocentric view of the world toward awareness, tolerance, appreciation, and understanding of other cultures and their customs, characteristics, and history.



In the primary classroom or center, as children learn to value themselves and reach out to form friendships, they begin to develop an appreciation of others. The teacher provides a variety of activities that foster a healthy development and respect for cultural similarities and differences, always honoring children's backgrounds and experiences. As children learn to perceive others, their first view often is through the lenses of those they love and respect. We need to help children develop respect and understanding of what all cultures share—being human.

By focusing on our similarities as humans, children can learn to accept cultural and individual differences. In this way, children will grow up to respect, honor, and value qualities that contribute to the multicultural fabric of society.

Accepting and Demonstrating Empathy

In their early years, children tend to be egocentric, often viewing and acting upon the world solely on the basis of their own thoughts and feelings. But as children learn to participate in the groups to which they belong—family, school, and community—we help them to realize all people experience similar feelings and need the support and encouragement of others within the group. Through discussion and negotiation, classroom community expectations can be established. Appropriate modeling and demonstration of empathy help children to develop sensitivity to their own feelings and those of others.

Becoming a Responsible Member of Society

Thinking, learning, and living are interrelated as are the individual and society. Learning to cooperate and cooperating to learn in a classroom or center are first steps toward working together to ensure the viability of our global community. The early primary setting helps children understand individual and collective rights and their responsibilities as members of society. Children are given opportunities to interact with others in different contexts for a variety of purposes, to cooperate, to collaborate, and to share in the building of community as tasks are accomplished. In this way, children understand that all actions have reactions and no decision stands alone.

Respecting and Caring for the Environment

For humans to survive as a species requires an understanding of and respect for the natural order of the world. By learning about the social, physical, and biological worlds, children learn to understand the place of humans in the natural order.

The teacher can use everyday events in the surrounding neighborhood and the larger community to help children focus on relevant environmental issues-teaching children, first to become aware of the problems we face in caring for and protecting the planet, and second how to become a part of the solution.

Adapting to a Changing World

Because we live in a rapidly changing world, we are continually faced with decisions that may have lasting impact on people and on the planet. We want children to understand in ways that are age appropriate the difficult decisions that we face regarding the environment. When they are encouraged to assume responsibility for their own actions and the result of those actions with their peers, other people and their environment, they will be prepared to act in thoughtful and responsible ways.

Experiences that correspond to a child's intellectual and emotional development will foster a good rapport with the natural world. "Children learn to empathize and identify with nature in early childhood; then they exhibit a natural tendency to explore in middle childhood; and in adolescence they move into the realm of social action. Curricula that respond to such natural rhythms of emotional and intellectual growth will be more effective than those that fail to capitalize on the inherent tendencies of childhood development."

Our responsibility is to nurture a new generation of environmentally sensitive and regionally grounded children through well-planned and thoughtful environmental education experiences.



References

- Bredekamp, S. & Copple, C. (Eds.). (1997). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs (revised edition)*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Elias, M. J., Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Frey, K. S., Greenberg, M. T., Haynes, N. M., Kessler, R., Schwab-Storne, M. E., & Shriver, T. P. (1997). *Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. p. 2.
- Holt, B. & Holt, G. (1977). *Science and young children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Hum, S. (1979). *Play and recreation*. Toronto: Canadian Council on Children and Youth.
- Johnson, D., Johnson, R. & Holubec, E. (1988). *Cooperating in the classroom*. Washington, DC: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kamii, E. (Ed.). (1990). *Achievement testing in the early grades: The games grownups play*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Katz, L. & Chard, S. (1989). *Engaging children's minds: The project approach*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Lasky, L. & Muderji, R. (1980). *Art: Basic for young children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Lowenfeld, V. & Britain, L. (1975). *Creative and mental growth*. NY: Macmillan.
- Orlick, T. (1978). *Winning through cooperation: Competitive insanity-cooperative alternatives*. Acropolis, NYU: Vanwell Publishing Limited.
- Piaget, J. (1963). *The psychology of intelligence*. Paterson, NJ: Littlefield & Adams.
- Thompson, C. M. (1995). Transforming curriculum in the visual arts. In S. Bredekamp and T. Rosegrant (Eds.). *Reaching potentials: Transforming early childhood curriculum and assessment, Volume 2*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. p. 95.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. p. 31.

Resources

- Bert, L. E. & Winsler, A.D. (1995). *Scaffolding children's learning: Vygotsky and early childhood education*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Charlesworth, R. (1987). *Understanding child development (2nd ed)*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers, Inc.
- Curry, N. & Johnswon, C. (1990). *Beyond self esteem: Developing a genuine sense of human value*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Derman-Sparks, L. (1989). *Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- DeVries, R. & Kohlberg, L. (1987). *Programs of early education: The constructivist view*. NY: Longman.
- Edelman, M. (1992). *The measure of our success*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Elkind, D. (1989). Developmentally appropriate practice: Philosophical and practical implications. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71.
- Katz, L. (1999). *Current perspectives on education in the early years: Challenges for the new millennium*. Urbana, IL: ERIC.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. (1991). Guidelines for appropriate curriculum content and assessment in primary programs serving children ages 3 through 8. *Young Children* 46(3).
- National Center on Education Statistics (Ed.). (1999). *America's kindergarteners*. Urbana, IL: Educational Resources Information Center.
- Roopnarine, J. & Johnson, J. (Eds.). (1993). *Approaches to early childhood education*. NY: Macmillan.
- Schweinhart, L. (1998). *A school administrators's guide to early childhood programs*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
- Siccone, F. & Lopez, L. (2000). *Educating the heart: Lessons to build respect and responsibility*. Needham Heights, NJ: Allyn & Bacon.